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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 003874

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PNAT](#) [IZ](#) [KDEM](#)

SUBJECT: PROPOSED CONFERENCE FOR POLITICAL MODERATES

Classified By: Political Counselor Robert S. Ford for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

**¶11. C)** Summary. Looking ahead to the December 15 elections, former Prime Minister Ayad Allawi is planning to launch a new multi-political party entity that is centrist and moderate. There is a kick-off conference planned for later this month, according to Allawi political allies. Allawi's political partners in the bloc would include the (Sunni Arab) Iraqi Islamic Party, the Communist Party, (Shia Islamist) Herakat al-Dawa, and Kurdish representatives. Allawi's political allies rebuffed PolOff's recommendation on September 19 that the bloc lend public support for the draft constitution; they said simply that the bloc would implicitly accept the constitution; they also doubted Prime Minister Jaafari would be publicly supportive. Interestingly, Allawi - never much interested in political organization - quietly has sought out training opportunities for his old Iraqi National Accord group with an American political NGO working here in advance of the December elections. End Summary.

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New Political Alliance Forming  
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**¶12. (U)** Al-Zaman newspaper reported September 19 that former Planning Minister Mehdi Hafedh told a press conference on September 17 that former Prime Minister Allawi's Iraqi National Accord (INA) party would seek to form an electoral bloc with the Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP), the Iraqi Communist party (ICP), the late Izzaldin Salim's Herakat al-Dawa party and Kurdish representatives. According to the story, the coalition's goal would be to reduce sectarian extremism in Iraq and reinforce national unity. It would also aim to reduce "foreign interference" in Iraq, according to Hafedh. (Comment: Allawi in private with us has underlined his strong concern about Iranian interference in Iraq. End Comment.)

**¶13. (C)** INA member Taher Khalaf Jaber al-Baka (former IIG Education Minister) confirmed to PolOff September 19 that plans for a founding conference are underway. Al-Baka noted that while members of PM Jafari's Dawa al-Islamiya would not be participating, the splinter group formed by the late Izzaldin Salim's Herakat al-Dawa would. Although press reports indicated that Kurdish parties would be in attendance, Iraqi Communist Party Secretary General Hamid Majeed Musa told PolOff September 19 that the particulars of the conference are not yet definite. He noted that Kurdish leaders would not participate because they want to remain separate to differentiate what the Kurdish political leaders are able to deliver to Kurds and Kurdistan. INA member and former Commerce Minister Muhammed Ali Abdul al-Ameer claimed to PolOff September 19 that the express goal of the founding conference is to form a new political entity.

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Thinking About the Campaign  
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**¶14. (C)** An American NGO official told PolCouns September 19 that his team has been working directly with Allawi for weeks on an initiative to establish a broad-based bloc that crosses sectarian lines. (He was surprised that Hafedh spoke about the planned bloc publicly.) This included several workshops with smaller secular and Islamist parties, including Izzet Shahbandar's Islamic Democratic Trend, with whom Allawi is trying to develop a larger coalition. He noted that at the INA's request, the NGO provided in July and August an intensive series of training programs in organization building, campaign management and political message development.

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A Political Platform in the Making  
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**¶15. (C)** INA member Haifa Khashen Azzawi told PolOff that the founding conference is the brainchild of both Allawi and Hafedh. By including the IIP, she said, the INA would be able to change the optic that it is too secular and anti-Islamist. INA member Husayn Muhammad Hadi al-Sadr (Muqtada's first cousin by marriage) told Poloff September 19 that the founding conference is the participants'

response to the current government's failure. The ITG, he charged, has failed in all sectors of the economy and services. Ministries have been built upon sectarian lines and not competence. The severe lack of coordination between the Presidency Council, National Assembly and Prime Minister's Office has become increasingly embarrassing. Al-Sadr cited as examples the two separate Iraqi delegations to UNGA this year and four separate delegations to attend King Fahd's funeral in Saudi Arabia. Hamid Moussa said the conference is about national unity, fighting terrorism and building an efficient, transparent government that respects rule of law. As with Musa, PolOff said that a conference of this kind was a step in the right direction for moderate Iraqi parties.

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De facto Support for the Constitution  
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16. (C) In all her conversations with the INA members above PolOff urged that Allawi make public statements in support of the draft constitution. All of these Allawi political allies told PolOff that Allawi is unlikely to do so. They also claimed that even Prime Minister Jafari won't publicly support the constitution. Former Commerce Minister al-Ameer highly doubted that the new entity would issue a statement in support of the constitution or the referendum. Ameer conceded that anyone who participates in the conference de-facto accepts the new constitution. He added that all of the participants surely have their reservations about the constitution but also agree that the political process should not be delayed.

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Comment  
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17. (C) In the January 2005 election, Allawi's political bloc was terribly organized, even if relatively well financed. (He truly owned the airwaves of channels like al-Arabiya and Sharqiya last January.) It is especially interesting that Allawi is trying to build a new coalition that crosses sectarian lines and that he is paying more attention now to organization than he did last autumn. Allawi has plenty of negative image problems here that he will also have to manage; the coalition might help him in that regard. We will pay close attention to the development of this bloc as a potentially useful addition to the Iraqi political scene.

Satterfield